



**COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**  
**March 14, 2022**

**Minutes**

**In Attendance:**

Renee Ciconte, Director, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services  
Cassandra Davis, Deputy Director, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services  
Joe Bryant, DYRS, Chief of Community Services  
Raheem Perkins, DYRS  
Danielle Stevenson, DYRS  
Natasha Smith, DYRS  
Aileen Fink, Director, Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health  
Keith Zirkle, DFS  
Judy McCormick  
Tim Brandau, Community Member

**Welcome/Introductions**

Director Ciconte welcomed the group. Meeting began with general opening remarks at 9:06am.

**New Deputy Director**

Director Ciconte introduced new Deputy Director Cassandra Davis. Attendees introduced themselves as well.

**COVID Update**

Director Ciconte reported that DYRS is doing well in regards to COVID19 currently. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> week of no new COVID19 cases in the division. Just after the conclusion of the last CAB meeting the division experienced an influx of cases in both staff and youth. Governor Carney has relieved us of the testing and vaccination mandate for the time being. The division is still testing facility youth on a rotating weekly basis. Any staff or youth that had reported positive have displayed with mild to no symptoms.

**Ferris Sports**

The Ferris lacrosse season has just begun. Ferris is struggling to have enough youth to encompass a team. This year the team will include Cottages youth as well. Additionally, Ferris football and basketball will begin in the summer.

Recently the division had to limit the number of spectators in attendance at games to parents and immediate family due to the increase in violence and prior security issues that have



developed on campus. DYRS utilizes the Delaware State Police and the SJO team to maintain security at Ferris games. Visiting teams are being required to provide a list of visitors attending. To date the visiting teams have been understanding.

## **GVI**

The GVI program has received a lot of media attention and DYRS has been very involved. GVI encompasses social services, law enforcement, and DYRS teaming together to reduce violence in the state. The GVI program is now moving into Dover. Our SJO team supports the team by doing curfew checks, monitoring GPS devices, and gathering intelligence for law enforcement. The division has also created a dedicated unit to case manage those youth who are involved with the GVI program. DYRS is only involved with youth that are active with the division. DHSS supports the program by working with the entire family to provide resources and provide a life coach for identified youth. Recently there was an indictment of Northpack youth that took them off the street; so therefore, we are seeing a decrease in violence.

## **Staffing and Job Fairs**

Recruiting is difficult currently. DYRS held a hiring event two weeks ago that proved to be successful. During the event the division recruited for PO's and Family Service Assistants along with the Youth Care Specialist and Treatment Specialist classifications. While the division still struggles to recruit staff, DHR secretary DeMatis is working with the division to develop some creative and effective recruitment and retention ideas. DYRS has been utilizing adult and juvenile probation officers to work overtime in DYRS facilities. Staff receive overtime and a \$300 incentive for each shift covered. ARPA money for adult PO's has run out so they can no longer work these shifts, however DYRS Probation Officers are still able with the incentive ending at the end of April. DYRS has drafted a new MOA to continue working with DOC, however their union will not sign it. DYRS will also continue working with unions to allow juvenile probation officers to voluntarily work these shifts after the expiration of the MOA. The number of youth in placement has been low so DYRS has been able to manage thus far. Only two residential cottages are currently open. Director Ciconte encouraged the group to share the word and recommend those they feel would be interested.

## **Additional Items**

YCOP Update – Currently there are only 2 youth post sentenced as adults. Upon their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday they will be transferred to DOC. The division is in the process of completing security upgrades to Ferris School to include replacing wood doors with steel doors, lighting enhancements, adding exterior cameras, and new upgraded fencing. The intent is to house these youth at Ferris. After the Ferris security upgrades are complete, the same upgrades will be applied to NCCDC. The long term goal is to block off the level 5 side of the campus. Currently DYRS staff patrols the campus during the day and Gettier patrols after hours.



Strategic Plan - DYRS is currently re-visiting our strategic plan. Once complete, the plan will be posted online.

Physical Therapy – The Physical Therapy RFP has reopened for continuum of services. DYRS is looking to enhance the physical therapy services provided to youth. The division has received many questions regarding telehealth and maintaining those services. The division is open to different formats, however, is looking for bidders to inform us of how they plan to engage youth in these services.

JFC Update – The division requested additional monies from JFC for additional SJO officers and supervisors so the division can move to 24/7 GPS response. This is an expansion of what is currently being done.

Re-Entry Services – The division received some funding to re-entry services to Level IV and Level V youth that are re-entering the community. DYRS has contracted with DCJ and YAP for these services. The service will begin at the Cottages in a week. DCJ will serve Cottages youth and YAP will serve Ferris youth. The programs will offer group based counseling services and more robust vocational training. These services will be provided up to a year after discharge. The division is hoping to see lower recidivism rates and better youth outcomes by the end of the year.

**Next Meeting:**                    **June 16, 2022 @ 9:00am**  
   **DSCYF Admin Campus, 1825 Faulkland Rd. Conference Room #199**